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First Poems

BY

EDWIN CURRAN

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Edwin Curran,



Moorehead Avenue,

Zanesville, Ohio

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Edwin Curran

THE FUTURE—IF WE WIN

I leaped here out of time and saw ahead
Into the years, still locked and chained and still;
I leaped into that great sleep, yet still dead
And saw there all the power of the human will,
All the toil of ages gathered and unfurled
Into a thing of beauty on a glorious hill,
The Flag of The United Nations of the World!

The sea was full of ships, great argosies in white,
With sweet wines, silks, sandalwood and wheat;
The fields lay heaped in gold and far abroad
The marts of all the world wore jewells of light.
The mountains laughed and peace was in the street
And gloriously, the world was happy as God.

On still the Vision took the human sense
Beyond the world and down the path of men,
Thru happiness immortal, thru the centuries
And on forever and forever hence
Past earth and time and space and back again,
Thru the endless joy of marvelous eternities.

THE ETERNAL QUEST

Man makes one journey all his living days,
Down thru the realms of music and of art;
Down thru the halls of fame and glorious praise;
Down thru the tears and triumphs of the heart
To some sweet woman waiting some place there.
For her he builds his cities and makes war,
Seeks gold and glorious wealth to store;
Just why he doesn't know and doesn't care.

Glorious is his doing, sweet his end to gain,
Happy his striving and the dreams he keeps;
All journeys end upon her lips and hair;
All roads lead to her eyes; all joys and pain
Up to her breast; all paths to where she sleeps;
Just why, he doesn't know and doesn't care.

GEORGE WASHINGTON IN WALL STREET

The winds wheel by with traffic sounds and calls
Carrying the shuffle of the street's innumerable
clan,

Yet all this movement of this life that falls
Is not unheard by this pale marble man.
Aged with a century, still those ghostly eyes
See there the multitude and curbstone war
Watching down those golden lanes afar,
Piercing the granite mountains to the smothered
skies.

He is not dead; some blood still courses thru him
warm.

Some light still burns behind those marble eyes,
A pulse knocks thru the darkness of that form,
And this man here still knows and is aware;
His heart is broken with the world's sad cries
And he longs to throw away his cleep and charm,
Slip off the stone as some cold cloak of air,
And lift his hand to where the flag's unfurled,
Then lead his soldiers out across the world.
Down beneath this grappling room of stone
A soul still smoulders wakened from its sleep
A consciousness that struggles with the night,
Maddened to be imprisoned here alone,
Ready to break that cage of death and leap
From out that stillness to the immortal fight.
The summer whistles up across the bay,
And like a tribute warms the marble cheek.
The stalwart figure seems to bend and strain
To break the locks and chains of its long day,
Struggling marvelously for words to speak,
Trying to throw off death and live again.
Some heart still beats behind that marble breast;
Some love sleeps back of those calm eyes of gray.
This man is not dead; he has never died.
His body stands there as the nation's guest
While his heart is the nation and the day
That vast eternal soul on every side.
This man has never perished and cannot;
Immortal he still stands there tall and broad
While all the nation 'round him is his thought,
His imperishable soul still living on with God.

↓
AUTUMN

The music of the autumn winds sings low,
Down 'by the ruins of the painted hills,
Where death lies flaming with a marvelous glow,
Upon the ashes of the rose and daffodils.
But I can find no melancholy here,
To see the naked rocks and thinning trees;
Earth strips to grapple with the winter year;
I see her gnarled hills plan for victories!

I love the earth who goes to battle now,
To struggle with the wintry whipping storm
And bring the glorious spring out from the night.
I see earth's muscles bared, her battle brow,
And am not sad, but feel her marvelous charm
As splendidly she plunges in the fight.

↓
AT THE MARNE

A furious snow fell like white rain
Upon Fair France,
Where men lay white and still and slain.
Poor France, poor France.

The driving milk leaped down in clouds
And whirled and whirled,
While France lay dazzling in her shrouds
To all the world.

White sheets with sheets the snow still fell
In brilliant showers,
Like sweet white roses, bell with bell,
And fragrant showers.

The petals scattered wide and spread
On France, Fair France;
Milk white and blowing on the dead;
And not a figure raised his head.
Poor France, poor France.

And there upon that winter day
God covered Christ up as he lay.
Poor France, poor France.

TO GERMANY

Beneath your whip America is reborn;
She finds her soul the more you lash and beat.
You taunted her to beauty, once forlorn,
But now so glorious and so marvelous, sweet.
She makes herself a god beneath your blows.
All through the land her quickened heart beat tells
You made her noble as her greatness grows.
She rises splendidly to God's war bells.

You tried to tramp her, but she leaps to run
Up to the quick alarming drums like Mars.
Her soul is stirred to music and her hand
Lifts up a sword as brilliant as the sun.
Oh Germany, you send her laughing to the wars,
A glorious, noble and immortal land!

THE QUESTION

When all the guns go back to sleep and dream
And starlit silence takes the battlefield,
Then who will build the world with beam and beam,
Lift up the ashes and the dust concealed?
Who'll knit the marvelous glory that must come?
Who'll help make beauty on the broken earth?
Bring splendor from the silent battered drum?
Who'll help rear glorious tomorrow into birth?

And from the ranks, from one who has a gun,
A calm voice answers to the world of men,
A voice that pierces to the farthest hill—
It is a man whose face is like the sun,
A Carpenter who went to war to die again,
Whose voice comes firmly to the world: "I WILL!"

SAILING OF COLUMBUS

The wind ran out across the golden sea,
Chained to our snowy shrouds, pulling our ships,
A slave who creaked the beams and dragged the hulls
Like plows along the waves in creams of foam.
On down the watery field, that hill of rain,
We stumbled on the wind, leaning on the sky,
Running into eternity and blue space,
Trying to touch that azure wall ahead.
On to that blue gate locked across the world
We climbed the slippery alleys of the sea—to it.
Its bolt seemed as the golden sun hung there ahead,
Its locks and bars the chisled clouds of white;
At night it hung there, studded with bright stars,
Drove in its purple planks, like silver nails,
Its hinges swung out on eternity.
On to that gate, there on the pivot stars,
We finally ran with Hope, as God's great key
And grappling with the locks, opened a world.

Kissing the mountain tops with golden lips
Day leaped out to the morning sky and flew
With shinning wings across the harbor ships,
A glittering runner in the silver dew.
He spilled his gold upon the sand and brine,
The happy harvest of eternity,
Reaped from the sky in lakes of sparkling wine,
Down by the murmur of the talking sea.
He threw this golden harvest on the world,
God's ripe sweet harvest for all mankind's bread,
And people fed on light spilled out abroad;
The flowers opened up their petals curled,
The fields drank, and the sea up from its bed,
Earth dined on gold, and all the world thanked God.

God built the grass, the hills and flowers;
Man built these streets and city towers.
God built the sky, the rain and clouds;
Man built these walls a temple for the crowds.
God built the wind, the plains and valleys;
Man built the traffic of these granite alleys.
God built the spark that drives the spheres,
Man built the city and its tears.
God built the sunlight and the stars;
Man built his suffering and the wars.
God built the world and air and time;
Man built the prison and the crime.
God built all thought, and being, sense;
Man builds his shadow fleeing hence.
God builds the things that will not pass,
While man could not construct a blade of grass.
And in this hall of various things displayed,
I can but choose the half that God has made.

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Before me lies the beauty of the world.
I see the day there resting by the stream
Like some gold bundle with its great arch curled,
Thrown on the lovely flowers as they sleep and
dream.

The day itself, a lovely flower gold,
Breaks in the sky and blossoms in its prime,
And the blue sky seems like a great bell tolled,
Rang by the tapping sun into a chime.

A spirit makes a voice of all that sky,
That hill of life that hangs above the earth,
And sits upon the hills and makes sweet cry
That life is glorious and full of marvelous mirth.

The fields are lakes of blowing flowers pied,
the grass is leaning on the wind in laughter
And ringing, belling up the countryside,
The robin's whistle falls on river water.

Then startling, leaping up on past the sun
A bugle whistles, then a cry—a gun!

CLOUD

The sky is calling me to go
Down thru the valleys of the sun;
Forever must I journey so
And spin and run.

Playfellow of the stars, I leap
Among their crowds and ring the moon
Seeking in its cradle to find sleep
Some midnight noon.

I toss the roving winds like grain
And let them spin and spill
Across this arching plain
Of time's blue hill.

I live in this blue mountain bent
Upon the earth its floor
So round and huge, the firmament,
A mighty purple door.

My road is thru it, God's great way
Chisled out of space and curled
And spreading out my wings all day
I whistle round the world.

The Great Adventure with its sweet romance
Now draws the flower of the nation near,
Beckoning with a chivalrous hand to France
Out to the beauty of this glorious year.
Duty, with a pressing finger to her lips,
Speaks to the heart with words unheard, yet heard;
And Honor points to all the anchored ships
Waiting for God to give the glorious word.

America calls her men around her knee;
They gather at the door step by her side
Listening to her all to do as told,
For as their mother she loves them most tenderly.
She calls them now to her from far and wide
And gathers them up to her breast of gold.

THE DEAD SOLDIER

Dissolving back into the universe,
I have become the field and wind and rock,
Melting into the body of the whole,
Melting into the substance whence I came
One with the stone, the air,
Taking on the garment of the dreamless field.

I now feel what it is to be those things
I looked upon and touched before I died.
All that I was not once I am;
All that surrounded me I have become.

I am dissolved now with the earth and sky,
Being space and moonlight and the dreamless wind,
Taking on the consciousness of earth,
Feeling as the grass, the bending trees, the light
Feeling as the glittering summer sun.
I came back to the universe I knew,
The great womb that I stumbled from.
I feel as flowing rivers and the clouds,
I feel as the spinning earth and falling rain,
I feel as all the sky and all the space,
Dissolved back into all and being all.

Grieve not for me, I feel you with the world,
I feel you with the earth; you stand on me.
I feel you with the wind that wraps you round.
Do not shed tears for I am on all sides.
Which way you look these things I have become.
You are within my greater being now.
When you hear music, know that it is me;
When you look on the flowers, I am them.
Your joyful moments, too, I have become.
I am the love of lovers and their dreams;
I am now happy past all words and thoughts,
Feeling a deep exquisite joy to be.
I am the world, I am all dreamless things.
Grieve not for me who know such marvelous peace.
I am far happier now than you.

You soul was sweeter than the nightingale,
Fair as the rose, lovely as the flowers,
Happy as God when he laughs in the dale,
Pure as the sunlight in the summer hours.
You were as the morning on the sea
Given eyes and laughter, splendid, white,
A consciousness that was eternity,
Breathing in a sweet immortal light.
You were as the sun and the golden days,
So charming, friendly, happy at my side;
And having loved, I cannot love another.
How easily—all too easily now comes praise
When you are gone. . . . You who so often cried,
So often laughed, so marvelously splendid, mother.

WINTER NIGHT

The stars like bells flash down the silver sky,
Taking the valleys with a holy glowing light,
And ringing like chimes on frozen trees, to cry
Along the marble ground of the iron night.
Solid are the stars and solid the world and hills,
Locked in frozen chains and dappled snow;
Fields of steel, as beautiful as daffodils
As moonlight flecks, deceiving them with glow.

The sky is full of flowers, white and pure,
And near, the sea rocks ribbons to the sand
Bubbles full of stars are there and the moon's hull
No nightingale gives whistle on the shore
But yet God laughs along the shingle strand,
Making death itself seem marvelously beautiful.

Are we doomed here? Is it decreed in Hell

The lamp of Civilization perish, Freedom fall?....

A terrible fear grips us—We cannot tell.

A vague distrust, suspicion creeps in all.

We peer into the night yet see no dawn.

We grow uneasy....God knows what's ahead.

A black illimitable void but draws us on.

Tomorrow we may perish with our dead.



God only knows what will the morrow hold;

What terrible ordeal, menace, beastly end;

What hideous sacrifice and treacherous destiny.

Yet....Here like men we will all fight, still bold,

And die like men whatever time will send....

So come what may, we can know only Victory.

TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

We ancients here are dead a thousand years,
Glorious in our day and happy dead,
The dust that makes your flowers—and your tears
The ashes of your beauty overhead.
You tramp upon us in your splendid prime
Wearing the world, a robe we threw away;
Wearing life, a garment, we had in our time;
Using the house we had, the golden day.

We are the ashes, you, the life that sprang;
Look here upon us in our crumbled temple stones;
Tread down our battlefields where we all now stay;
But think that with archaic harps we sang
We simple folk who gave the dust our bones,
And loved you all that you might live a day.

Think there of us.... We send our souls to you,
We send our love a greeting down the years....
Unborn, unseen, unknown to our sight.
We love you there for all the centuries thru,
You have your laughter, joy, and we but tears,
Yet we are happy, dead.... For we were Right.

Now we are dead a thousand years and days,
But earth, the rock, the wind that blows the sky,
Yet ringing still we hear your endless praise.
We are the living dead who could not die.
Sweet scholars, statesmen, lovers one and all,
Like you we did not dream that we must pass
Till suddenly we heard the midnight fall
And ere we knew were flowers and the grass.

So when you pluck a rose sometimes but see
Its lovely heart some happy heart of old;
And look upon the field and meadowland
As but our silence in eternity.
And if you feel a rising.... Know we held
Like you there, emotion and shall understand,
And feel with you there all your ecstasy,
And you will see the waving grass.... our hand.

I knew you once as Helen of old Troy,
Where for your kiss the world fought, and your lips
Caused red rose blooms on breasts of many a boy,
And your laugh filled the sails of a thousand ships.
We knew each other well beneath Troy stars,
Your white and supple body on the lawn
Bent watching down the sky across the wars .
Loosening harp strings with tunes from Babylon.

I leaned and kissed you like the lips of spring,
Bend down the winds to kiss her lovely flowers,
Holding your hand and listening to you sing
While all the world came battling to the towers.
There God was. . . . And our souls cling fondly still,
Remembering the bells, and every fond caress.
Though Troy blew on the wind time could not kill
Your last kiss on the rose, or tenderness,
Or rob the lovely grass there on the hill
Of your sweet imprint and your pure deliciousness.

There you are still and I in old, old Troy
Watching the starlit winds fly on the night,
Gazing down heaven glittering in its joy,
Laughing with it and its marvelous light.
I feel your touch, your breath, your tremble sweet,
And still I tremble with you, there abroad
Upon the earth before the white stars' feet,
Before the universe, there still before our God.

We have not died. . . . Your harp is playing still.
I see the moon go spinning up Troy sky,
While stars shake out to music down their hill
Where all the clarion trumpets whistle by
Breaking the golden night to melodious bars. . . .
The sweet trees lean out on the wind above
And bells go knocking thru the stars,
While comes a pipe from some half drowsy dove
To fall out soft upon the clamorous wars
Where boys wear breasts of roses for your love.

To France! To France! The magic music falls
Across the world the voice of God now calls
To France!

The war bells ring, and all the wide world gongs,
As soldiers march out with their battle songs
To France!

The bugles and the music of the earth
Call out with joy and marvelous mirth
To France!

To France for God, to France for Liberty
To France for Peace and our Democracy,
To France!

Columbia's hand now lifts the torch of war
And starts with blinding light across the star
To France!

The millions, brilliant, march on down the sky
And Great America rings with all the cry
To France!

Come one, come all, to spend your lives and gold.
Come heroes, gentlemen, the brave, the bold,
To France!

Come citizens in khaki, every one,
Come find your God, come march into the sun,
To France!

To France, to France, the bugles, silver curled
Go ringing out their chimes across the world
To France!

Come one, come all, the magic music falls,
The voice of God goes ringing with its calls,
TO FRANCE!

CHRIST

That night
The sky bent to the manger with still lips.
The universe hung watching with its stars
A dazzling drapery of silver fire,
Hung like a curtain to the marvelous spot.
The soul of all creation held its breath,
Leaned over with dumb time to watch the scene.
A hush locked silence to the silver hills
Where all infinity bent down in wonderment.
There was an hour that a man might love.

To the crossroads of the world and time
Where eternity stood pausing at the forks,
A shape came out of time and space to be
A thing of beauty and a joy forever,
Topping the world like music not to cease,
Lovelier than the rose, sweeter than song.

There came a sense to never die or pass
A thought that has enfolded all the world.
That hour was the hinge where being turned;
There all creation pivoted and swam
Out from the night and all the darkened past
Into the splendid beauty of the sun.
There as a flower burst so Christ was born.

Rocked in His mother's arms He was the bee,
Her breasts the blossoms where He suckled honey.
Lovely grew His eyes and sweeter grew His form.
His tongue found childlike music and first words.
His lips kissed her lips and He laughed to be.
Running in the golden sun He loved the world;
He loved the flowers, streams, the rain, and birds.
He loved the beauty of the golden afternoons;
And all things on the earth in turn loved Him;
He grew to be a happy and a noble man;
He loved the world and all the world loved Him.

Strong and beautiful He grew before his God
A youth of music and a youth of song,
Finding life a miracle, a delicious thing,
Finding being as a marvelous joy.
He laughed along the world and had his day,
Happy as the glory of eternal summer.

Peace was in his blood; with all the world
That tapped like bells across His heart and brain;
Life was music, and His consciousness
Held earth and beauty, and with these
He was but one, dissolved in glorious youth.

He loved the sunlight that hung on the grass
And swung across the skies a hill of gold;
The dappled shadows were as wine to Him.
He loved the rose and kissed her crimson blossoms
In forest halls where patterned flowers grew.
The whistles of the birds came as a flute
And pierced His ears with golden song and bells;
So finally he burst to the prime of man.

Life was to him a glorious, beautiful thing;
Full of the earth's fire, full of God and time.
His soul contained the world and universe.
He was a man to match the stars and sun,
To match the ocean and eternity.
To match the world, the mountains and His God.
His eyes burned like great jewels with His great love
He seemed to know, to look beyond tomorrow
And see the marvelous destiny He had
And finally that came like a cry.
The world was broken—It called out for God
And He went up to Calvary to die.

With no complaint he mounted up the hill,
Staggering, laboring with the happy tree,
Lifting mankind with Him as He rose,
Lifting all the world with every step.

On top the sky the rabble finally paused
Where all the world lay sprawled below
In mellow hills and running rich with green
To kiss blue skies that bent their curves around.
There lay the wave of land in ocean space
And He upon its crest pierce on its tip.
The Cross much like a hand reached to the skies;
There up a finger lifted straight to God, of wood
Pointing to eternity and time, with Him
A shape forever sacred to the world
A form of marvelous beauty past all things.

He linked the beams there to Himself and hung
As all the sky dropped down with dusk
And winds went flapping by with blackened wings;
The rustling air like ebon silk
Kissed on His lips and panting breast
Caressed His limbs and swam on wondering, by.

He leaned against the world and felt its pain,
Felt all its sorrow and its grief to come;
Felt all its pain and all its love and joy;
Felt all its generations cry to Him.

The earth began to tremble, made alive,
Breathing like an animal below,
Tossed like a ship in some illimitable sea,
Pulsing, shaking with its monstrous sides.

But bolted to the sky in silence there
He made no word or cry, but loved man still,
There standing on the nails, and space and time.
Rocks split and terror shuffled down the earth;
The graves yawned and ecerements unwrapped
From burying grounds came laughter and wierd song

But silent there he suffered in the night,
Flying in the gale, rocking in the storm,
Shackled to the mountain and the sky,
Chained and locked to all the elapping winds,
Drowned in the whistle of the storm and rain.
The lightning silvered down His beautiful shape
Like shining liquid poured on ivory
Plating the sculpture of the marvelous man.

And someone put a rose upon His breast
And there it hung, a dappled crimson flower.

Sentinel, where is morning on the world?
Break the night for night has slept too long.
Where is the dawn? Is her rose still uncurled?
Unburst it! Let us have a harp and song!

Sentinel break the night with a golden spear—
Why does it stand out in the field like one
Who clings to all the earth with craven fear,
Pushing with his shoulder on the rising sun?

Sentinel, unlock the morning from its chains;
Throw by the belts from off the eastern door;
Unlock that portal hinging on the plains,
And let the dawn gate loose its golden store.

Sentinel, the wings of morning wait somewhere
To break the night upon the world of men;
Somewhere that golden hearth crackles in the air.
Sentinel, tap the sky for day again.

Sentinel, knock upon that eyeless wall
And whistle sunrise down the hills with light.
The world grows weary and it sends its calls,
A voice that shrills up from the dreadful night.
The wind beats like a black bird down the skies
Flapping on, unheeding men's sad cries.

Sentinel, leaning on the stars, on watch, above
You will not fail us, bending overhead.
Let burst the morning like a flower of love,
A rose there in Your breast of brilliant red,
Your wound too, where the world is dead.
Sentinel, burst the morning out with song;
The dreadful eyeless night has slept too long.

Ring out cathedral bells with glorious light,
Sentinel, lift Your spear and break the night!

DAWN ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The morning bent with golden lips above
And watching like a mother overhead,
Pressed closely down with all a mother's love
And kissed the field of dreamless warrior dead.
The gold lips came down there to every one,
But was it only morning and the skies?
There was it only dawn and the gold sun?
Was there not Something more in those bright eyes.

Watch! said my soul, and I looked on the world;
The moon fell down its golden well a flower,
Its exquisite and lovely petal curled;
And all the stars reigned in a silver shower.
Hear! said my soul, the whistle in the gale
And listening, came the tapping bells afar
And sweeping strings of God's immortal nightingale
Perched on a bough—or was it on a star—

I walked out in God's house across the grass
Seeing its beautiful carpet and green walls;
His stairways of the hills where He could pass
And tramp up on their steps along His halls.
I saw His chairs, the flowery paved plateaus;
His soft divans, the turfted velvet dells,
And saw His hearth out where the sunset glows
Where He sits calling night with mellow bells.

I saw Him lean against His window of the dawn
And set His candle in it of pure gold
And call the choirs of the fields and streams
Where He sat listening as the day wore on;
Then drawing down the evening shade, half cold,
He hung lamps in the sky and laid down to His
dreams.

The world is burning and the world is dead,
And all the sky seems breaking overhead,
Marvelous disaster rides the winds afar,
The sword leaps from the scabbard's mouth to war.
The walls of day are falling in, and night
Spreads out its wings flapping down the sphere
Where monstrous darkness drowns the feeble light
Wrecking what is beautiful and sweet and dear.

Yet—Let the hills leap down the be the sea,
The world lie shattered, black, and ashes gray,
The planet blow on withered down the sky;
Let emperors kill and throttle Liberty....
Yet some one here will fight till the last day,
And if one man, America cannot die.

TO A BEREAVED WIFE

He does not feel the earth upon his breast
Or hear sweet music or the bells
Of temples, or see the golden west
When spring is in the dells.

Yet—when you see the sunlight, think his eyes
Are on you, and when you feel the wind pass
through,

Know that his sweet caress comes from the skies;
And as the golden day, sits there by you.

Look on the flowers, his remembered soul,
And know the moonlight is his kiss returned;
And feel the spring, his love, with you the goal
And all the lovely stars his eyes you mourned.

Feel there your life as his kind heart you knew
His being living laughing there in you.

SOLDIER'S EPITAPH

Rear marble till it dazzles all the skies
With snowy beauty on the battle field;
Top all our graves with granite stones that rise
A white eternal monument on us, concealed.
Bring flowers till you drown the world in blooms
And snow our graves into a silver sea,
Making beautiful these immortal silent rooms,
Topping with glory our immortality.

Yet, still we have a greater monument,
A tomb built by the long eternity,
A house the storms may beat against in vain;
Our cerement is earth and all the firmament;
Spring makes us flowers; and the golden days to be
With sunshine, make our bright shaft rising from
the plain.

THANKSGIVING

Look on the broken world, a camp of war,
This terror, rape and flame, these shaking guns,
This devastation of a mad autocracy
And know it but a fragment what Germany planned
 | before,
And thank God that you have seen, with your sons
This menace soon enough to save your Liberty!

Men ask, have Christianity and Christ both failed?
But it is all a miracle they have availed.
Lift up your voice in praise. They did not fail,
They will not fail. You are still strong and Free.
And do not curse them for they will avail,
Already God has saved your Liberty.

EACH SOLDIER

When I die, think this heart not dead or blind
But beating still within the human whole;
Think of my thought as turned in all mankind
Dissolved in it, the universal soul.

When you hear music know it is my voice;
When you feel happiness, it is my hand
Laid on you; and of your Freedom make rejoice
For that is me still living on your land.

When spring comes up the world I greet you still;
And when the wind walks with you it is me;
And when you hear the nightingale, give ear,
Look on the rose, my heart, death could not kill;
And know my soul is still your Liberty,
The sunshine; and your love and happiness here.

FIRST FROST

A sparkling sunset, oranged to gold,
Rings like a bell of sorrow told,
Across the night of whistling gold;
For now an arm swings near and far
The brittle lamp of every star.
The flowers grow in the garden pied
Velvet, imperial, laughing wide,
While on them hovers as a breath
The whistling frost with silver death.
I grieve to see the wine-red crowd
And watch and watch them, tall and proud,
And tell them that tonight death comes,
Beating the stars like kettle drums.
For the last time I kiss their breasts,
The lovely golden fleeting guests,
Made sad to think on morning's shore
Their beauty will be nevermore.
I grieve to see them fall and die
Where kindled, burning, sparkling high
The stars make mirrors of the sky.
I bid them farewell in their sleep,
Wrapped now in snowy silver seas,
For they, immortal, will but leap
Like us, to a more marvelous peace.
And here I sit by them and view
The solid sky as white frost comes,
Knocking the winds to silver dew,
Beating the stars like kettle drums.

I picked up the elod.
"You may yet be a man," I said. "Dream on.
Are you not glad? Do you not tremble?"
But dully it looked at me.
I could swear I heard a sigh of relief.
There was no ecstasy, no joy.
"I have been a man," the elod said.

TRIBUTE

Suddenly from void and time and space
I looked into your face.
Out from the nowhere then I came,
You shaped me, gave me name.
You reached a hand to me—
I grasped it, immortality.
Out of the nowhere spread so broad
You gave me time, and life and God.
Somewhere you found me in that vast
Somewhere in all that silence massed,
You reached a hand
And I, the unknown, came to understand.
You reached a hand to me;
I took it immortality.
Down from the heavens pressed, I found your breast.
You took a thought and circled it with time,
Yourself so vast sublime.
You went around the universe to mould
Its consciousness to leaping gold.
You boxed the world and time and space
And locked it in a wondering face.
You wrapped yourself around infinity
And wrought its consciousness to be;
You made the feeling of all time to run
In the sun.
You made the feeling of all space leap free
And be.
You gave the shadow of the skies, eyes.
And I am their shape, your thought, their thought
A miracle wrought;
The essence, being, of all time and space
That suddenly look in your face.

I remember you and robins of the Spring,
God and everything,
Daffodils blowing on the ground,
Bursting roses mound on mound,
And all the world your thought went round.

THOUGHTS OF LOVE

My thoughts go out and rest by your side now
Watching you and touching on your cheek.
They blend in you, that smile upon your brow.
They are you there, your laughter as you speak.

That rising in your soul is their soft hand
Laid on your being in its inner heart.
There in your blood you feel them brush on thru
They look out from your eyes—do you not understand
That every tremble in you is that part
Of me that leaps out gladly bringing love to you?

AUTUMN

In ashes lies the lovely rose,
The jonquils blackened on the stem,
The lily withered with its blows
And every bonny gem.
But dust are daffodils outspread,
Each petaled flower dank and curled—
What grief, what crying of the dead
Has brought this sorrow on the world!

Here to the ground the dahlia showers,
No longer leaning on the breeze,
And all the sweet imperial flowers
Drop in this house that spans the seas.
They could not live in so much pain;
Grief fills the house from East to West,
This mighty house that spans the plain
And bends around the skies at rest.

In ashes lies the lovely rose,
The lily withered with its blows
And all the dappled flowers pied
Like ghosts upon each stem,
For all this beauty dropped and died,
Each bonny gem.
They could not keep the bloom and leaf,
They could not live in so much grief.

So every flower, dank and curled,
Dies like the flower of the world.

IN NORTHERN FRANCE

The moonlight, patterning all the cloudy sky,
Shaped on the wall of night with silver bars
A huge cloud form that floated, drifting by
Like some great building leaning on the stars.
Swung in the hammock of the wind it sped
Masoned from the blocks of clouds and light,
Windowed into bloom like some cathedral dead,
Its buttresses high on the walls of night.

I saw the belfry and the solid towers,
The mellow clouds all built up, sail with sail,
And chiseled to a great cathedral form—
And Fancy saw there all the heavenly powers,
The angels lifting on the silver gale
The martyred Rheims to Heaven in the storm.

ASHES OF THE SEA

To France when Peace comes all the world will go
And pile rich flowers on the noble dead;
Build monuments and dazzling marble shafts;
Songs will be sung and thousands weep on them,
There on France's great immortal battlefields.
But who will rear white marble on the sea?
Who'll find those graves lost in that solid hill,
That mountain of pure rain that rocks the world?
It is its own gravedigger and its priest
And shovels men to sleep with lapping prayer.
Those men will have no flowers on their grave.
No grass grows on the sea, no blossoms fall.
There are no church yards and no chapel chimes;
No roads where lovely women laugh on by;
No singing children with arms full of roses;
No snowy marble marks the silent water.
They hear no music of the whistling birds.
No grass grows on the sea, no flowers fall.
No one will build white monuments on waves.
No one will snow the water with white stones.
The white cap waves will be their only flowers
And be their only monuments that God builds there.
Their tomb will be the mighty bending sky.

CREATION

Out from the night there came a musical cry
Trembling the void and tossing out blue space,
And then an arm threw worlds across the sky,
In scattered flocks into the vacant place.
Down in a storm the winds went spinning, new
And in that dusk along the blackened tomb
Chaos began to move and stumble thru,
Then shrank and shriveled to its monstrous womb.

Life trembled waiting, with the sun, and light;
Then, startled into music like bells trill,
Being leaped upon the wind and swam the sky;
Consciousness ran from the fleeing night;
Time elicked; and light rushed out a golden hill;
Space was, with God; and marvelously, you and I.

SHAKESPEARE

Jovial Shakespeare, like the man he was,
Loved every flower in God's marvelous room,
Remembering all the happy bells and grass
And morning spinning like a rose to bloom.
How often had he rambled with the dew
At tip of dawn across the ancient hills,
Plucking the violet, pausing where it grew
To gather bundles of the daffodils.

Full of God's music and the world and time
His consciousness contained eternity,
As old as space and time and earth, and broad—
The world went thru his blood to knock; sublime;
He reached among the planets and infinity
And laid his hand into the hand of God.

THE RAIN SONG

Across the harp strings of the pane
I hear the belling rain
Plucking music from the glass;
Singing in the grass;
Chiming the flowers
With its showers.
And the rain song
With its gong
Trembles long
Bells on the petals curled
Singing to the blooms
With its booms
The oldest song in the world.

SPRING 1918

When oxlips fleck the grass and roses hide
Their warm blood in the shade to sleep and dream;
When robin songs go down the countryside
Across the valley and the woodland stream;
When spring comes laughing on the world again,
Her hands thrust upward to the burning sun,
Then we shall go to find our warrior men
Who ceased to laugh, who ceased to leap and run.
By hearts of oak who went across the waves
To duty in their prime of peace and mirth,
Who found a marvelous beauty past the sea,
Some place in France we shall bend by their graves
And strew the lovely flowers of the earth
Upon their sleep, far happier there than we.

THE HUMAN FORM

It is God's thought that drifted from all space
Come out of time and being to the sun,
Come from eternity and night to find its place,
Built by the ages, given legs to run.
It cannot die; its ashes ever rise
More beautiful, sublime and pure.
The universe worked over it for long.
It represents God, time, the stars, the skies;
Their handiwork to ever more endure
Their soul, their thought, their love, their silent
burst of song.

I lay, a soldier dead,
But overhead
I was the sunshine on my land
Its Peace, and men could understand;
I was their Liberty for which I died,
The happy day that kept their side
Changed by death's crucible to sweet increase,
My soul, their happiness and Peace;
My soul, by the miracle of death to be
My nation's honor and its Liberty.

GRAND CANYON

God's moonlight plays upon its painted cave,
Sifting out silver in a glorious hill,
Down thru that mighty workshop and world grave,
Now with its cosmic pulse there lying still.
Its heart is dead, its anvil cold and bent,
The mighty quarry with its side walls curled,
Where God first modeled out the firmament
And chisled out the marble for the world.

Abysses keep their silver silences,
Sprinkled with starlight and the crying wind,
Down thru those colossal halls where revelry
Once spoke the Mason's busy happiness;
Where worlds sprang from, now ashes blind,
The shriveled womb of old eternity.

TO A FAINTFUL ONE I HAD DOUBTED

Still doubting you I dreamed that I had died,
Slipping off the stars and leaving all behind,
Dropping out of space, and spreading wide
Into the vast illimitable world of wind.
Along the darkness, on I stumbled still
Into an eyeless night like solid jet,
Losing the sun across a rocky hill,
Still shuffling in a wild insane regret.

I suffered deeply that I had to die
My road grew rough and gnarled and crags appeared
Clawing the wind that whistled like the sea.
My path led to a wailing, red-lit sky
I looked on Hell and all my soul was seared,
Till looking back I saw you following me.

Now we go out to die, we young men here
Taking posterity with us and our all;
We of the eagle nation this marvelous year
Our mighty youth to meet the mortal call.
Beautiful armies we have marshalled forth
Our fathers' sons swift to the trumpet blast,
From east, from west, from south, from north;
Now love us as you look upon us last.

We go but past the sea where men will kill,
Happy to go happy to die for Peace,
Happy that our women love us still.
Now look upon us as we pass the sky
To find God in the sun beyond the seas;
Look—and take our image that will never die.

THE ALLIES

Brothers of the blood and of the soul,
Links of gold run thru the breaking seas
Locking two continents in eternal peace,
Making a broken world at last one whole.
Brothers of the blood, the bonds of Liberty
Are forged upon the anvil of our dead.
We pour our blood in the one cup as bread
Men's souls will feed upon for all eternity.

Golden is the day and glorious is the hour
When down the world we go together, one;
Warriors of Almighty God and Peace,
In fields of steel marvelous with power
Shaking the earth and circling the sun,
Sweeping aside the rivulet of the seas.

I gaze upon the stricken autumn world
And see life's sorrow and its vain regret
And all its suffering hidden in its fields
That seem like mirrors holding up the world
So full of torture and so full of pain.
So strange they are, so melancholy, sad, these fields,
Their flowers and their harvests all are gone;
They have been reaped like life and are now bare;
I look upon them with a strange regret
For in them all I see the stricken world
Whose soul they are so dreary and so sad.

I think of all the flower of mankind
That like the flowers of these fields, is dead,
Whose ashes seem these lonesome wistful fields.
I think of all the dead and see them here,
I see the tears here of the sorrowing world.
For all these things are in the autumn fields;
So sad, still so golden, yet so sorrowful
They look at one as tho they understood
And felt their blood drops like the wounds they
 seem,
Their spattered crimson and their brilliant hues
As that immortal offering that is spilled
To come up thru the roots and cry to God.

Their trembling purple eyes seem stricken youth,
Their sleep with withered breasts a strange pale
 death,
They seem there like the old, old dead, they are
So strange and beautiful, so terribly sad.

The tears rise up, God tells me not from where,
As from the whole world's dead I hear a call,
And feel them touch me with their marvelous grief.
For I can feel and see man's ashes here,
The beautiful flower of the race now gone.
I hear the melancholy wind their voice again;
I see their blood spread on the painted hills,
And see their eyes stare from the shining trees
 And glitter when the stars swim out above.
I see here all men's broken loves and hopes,
The suffering and the tears of all the world.
For all these things are in the autumn fields.

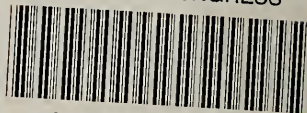


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